

**I.A.S. NORTH ISLAND
HALSEY FIELD**

518

WELCOME
MR
PRESIDENT













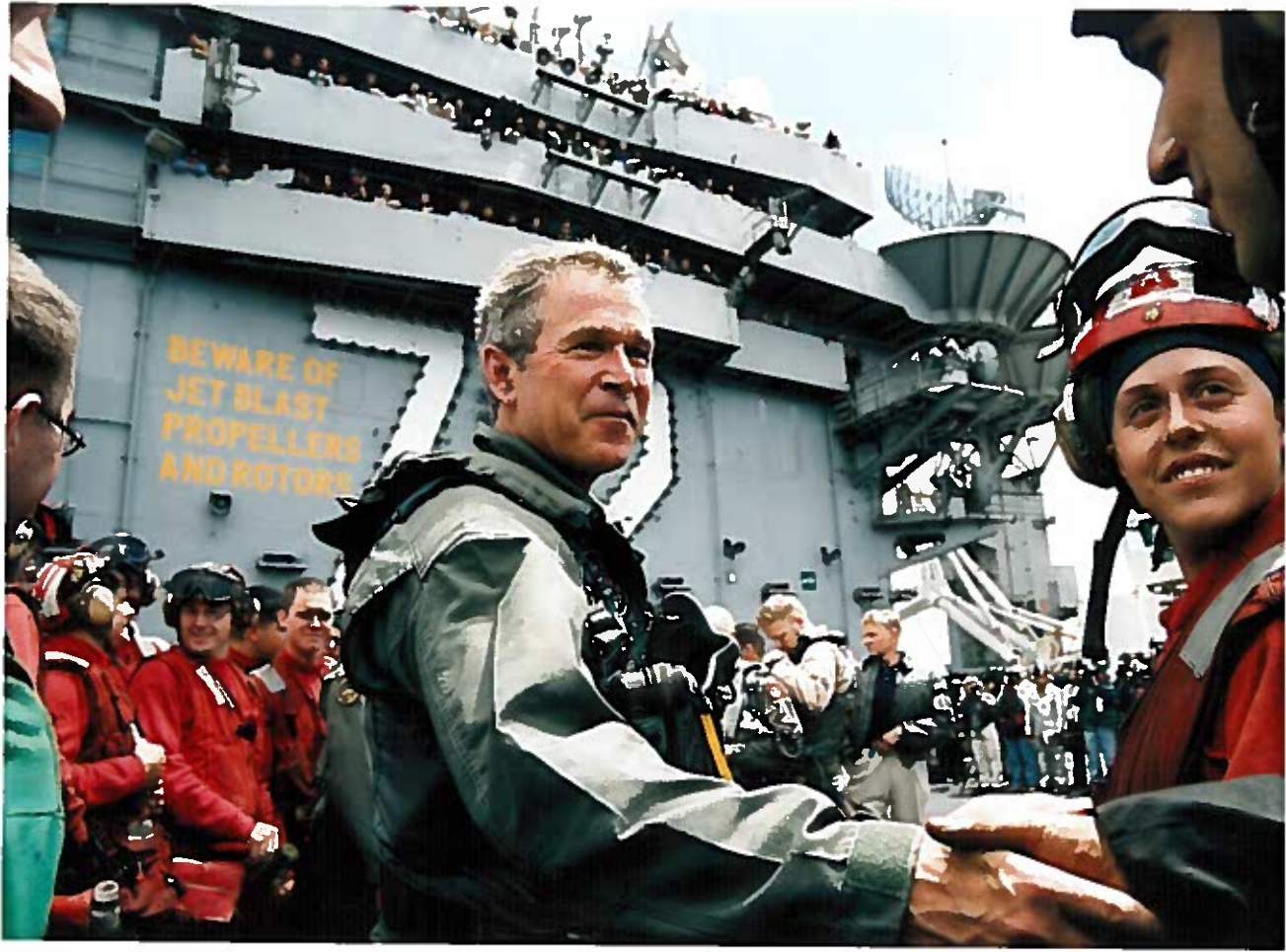
GEORGE W. BUSH
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF







































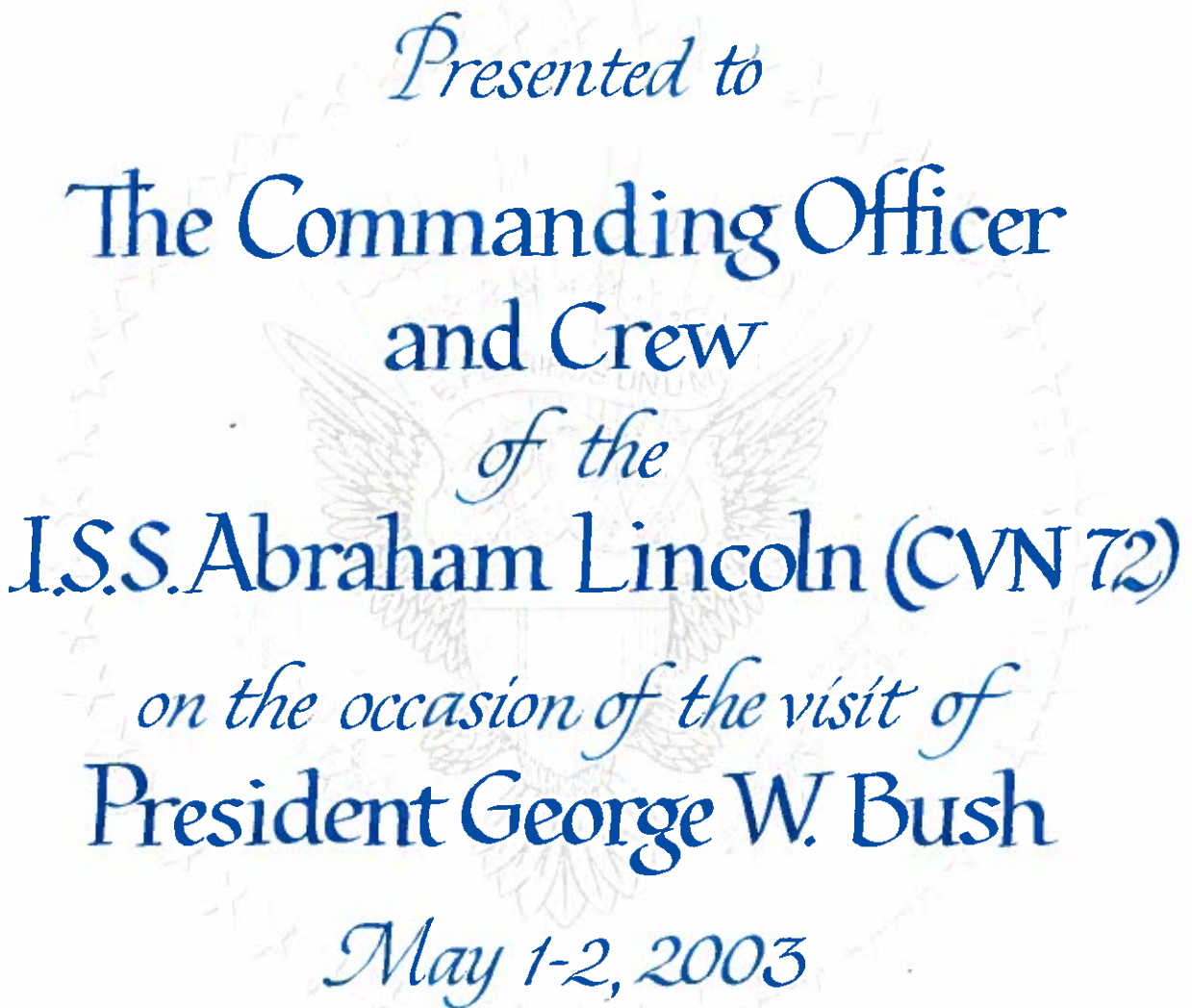












Presented to
**The Commanding Officer
and Crew**
of the
U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72)
on the occasion of the visit of
President George W. Bush
May 1-2, 2003



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 16, 2003

To the Men and Women of the
USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN-72):

Thank you for your hospitality and all that you did to help make my visit to the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN such a success. My stay aboard your fine carrier is a highlight of my presidency.

Your extraordinary role in Operation Iraqi Freedom helped to preserve the security of our homeland and the freedoms America holds dear. I commend you for your outstanding achievements in defense of our country, and your unfailing devotion to duty.

The United States military is the finest in the world, and I am proud to serve as your Commander in Chief. Thank you for your dedicated service to our Nation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geo 32", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all very much. Admiral Kelly, Captain Card, officers and sailors of the USS Abraham Lincoln, my fellow Americans: Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed. And now our coalition is engaged in securing and reconstructing that country.

In this battle, we have fought for the cause of liberty, and for the peace of the world. Our nation and our coalition are proud of this accomplishment — yet, it is you, the members of the United States military, who achieved it. Your courage, your willingness to face danger for your country and for each other, made this day possible. Because of you, our nation is more secure. Because of you, the tyrant has fallen, and Iraq is free.

Operation Iraqi Freedom was carried out with a combination of precision and speed and boldness the enemy did not expect, and the world had not seen before. From distant bases or ships at sea, we sent planes and missiles that could destroy an enemy division, or strike a single tanker. Marines and soldiers charged to Baghdad across 350 miles of hostile ground, in one of the swiftest advances of heavy arms in history. You have shown the world the skill and the might of the American Armed Forces. Our commitment to liberty is America's tradition — declared at our founding; affirmed in Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms; asserted in the Truman Doctrine and in Ronald Reagan's challenge to an evil empire. The advance of freedom is the surest strategy to undermine the appeal of terror in the world. Where freedom takes hold, hatred gives way to hope. When freedom takes hold, men and women turn to the peaceful pursuit of a better life. American values and American interests lead in the same direction. We stand for human liberty. Other nations in history have fought in foreign lands and remained to occupy and exploit. Americans, following a battle, want nothing more than to return home. And that is your direction tonight. After service in the Afghan and Iraq theaters of war — after 100,000 miles, on the longest carrier deployment in recent history, you are homeward bound. Some of you will see new family members for the first time — 150 babies were born while their fathers were on the Lincoln. Your families are proud of you, and your nation will welcome you. All of you — all in this generation of our military — have taken up the highest calling of history. You're defending your country, and protecting the innocent from harm. And wherever you go, you carry a message of hope — a message that is ancient and ever new. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "To the captives, come out," — and to those in darkness, "be free."

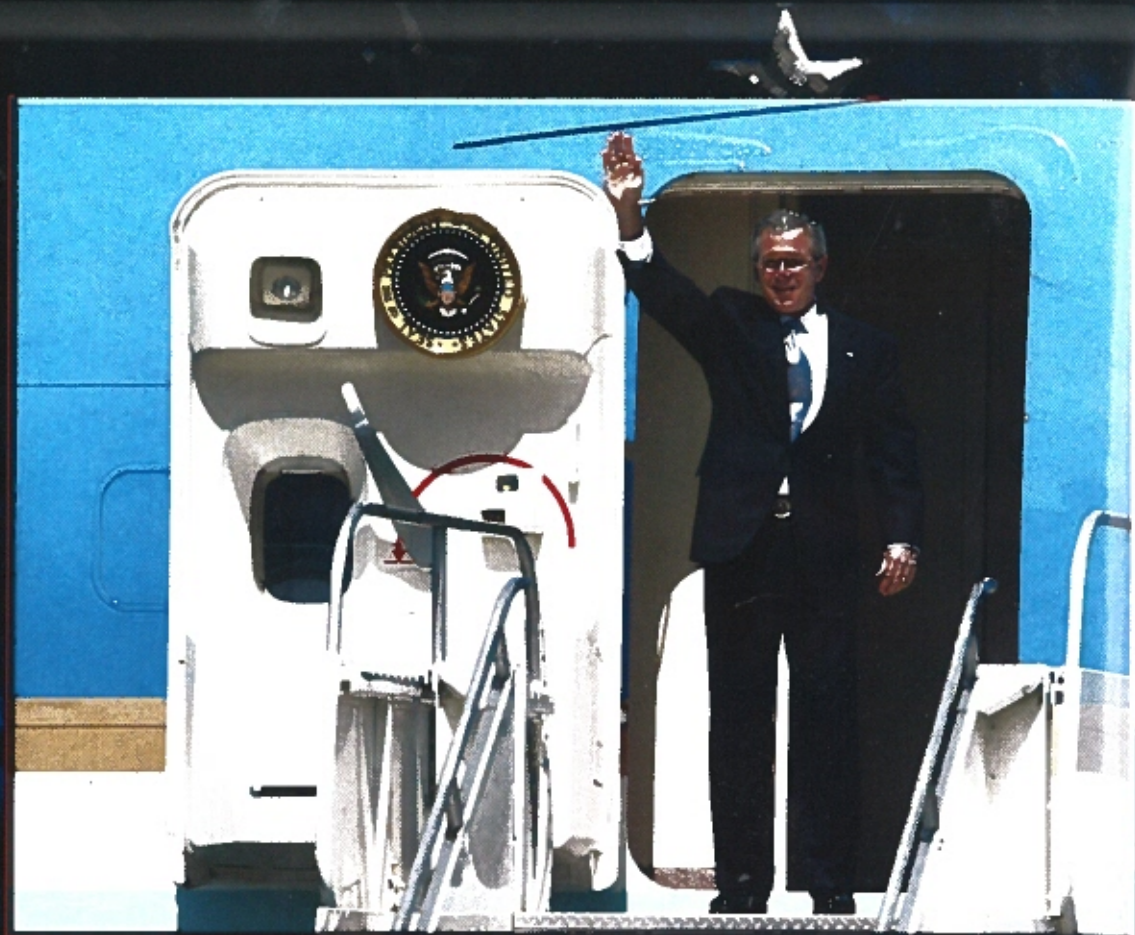
Thank you for serving our country and our cause. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless America.

END 8:27 P.M. PDT





FOR GEORGE W. BUSH



GEORGE W. BUSH

